

Balance of Power: A game-changer for Women's Leadership in the Pacific

Balance of Power (BOP) is a multi-country, locally led initiative that supports more inclusive leadership in line with national and regional priorities. Building on lessons learned about what works and what doesn't in the Pacific context to improve gender equality, BOP provides strategic support to local actors working to increase women's voice and agency in leadership and decision-making, particularly in the political sphere.

Tonga

"I am so grateful for the assistance that Balance of Power has shown to Tonga Police ... I hope this partnership we have forged will continue for the benefit of our women leaders serving the people of Tonga". Deputy Commissioner Sokoppeti Faletau, outgoing Chair of the PICP WAN/current Chair of the Tonga Police WAN

Continuing collaboration with the **Women and Children Crisis Centre Tonga (WCCC)** to facilitate *talanoa* programs with **kava clubs** in Tongatapu. Drawing on findings from BOP's 2020 research on voter perceptions of women as leaders in Tonga, the initiative provides a space to **engage with men** on issues of leadership, gender power dynamics and culture.

Co-facilitation of the **Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Women's Advisory Network (PICP WAN)** 20th annual conference in Nuku'alofa. The event included a **'Women Leading Change' panel** featuring BOP's Executive Director, Mereani Rokotuibau, and BOP allies, Major Caroline Vakalahi-Fairs and Selu Kauvaka, President of Tonga Women in ICT. Rev Dr 'Ungatea Kata, Director of Tupou



BOP facilitating the panel at the PICP WAN 20th annual conference in Nuku'alofa.

Tertiary Institute, delivered the keynote address on women leading change in male dominated sectors like the church. BOP also used the conference to showcase its **Adaptive Leadership program** delivered to **Public Service Commission senior leaders**, facilitated by 'Ofakilevuka Likiliki, Director of the WCCC.

Facilitation of a panel of BOP partners at the 'Family Conference' convened by **Tapuaki Mei Langi Consultancy**, a local provider of leadership programs and a

family parenting program to discuss how BOP is using a non-conventional approach to instigate dialogues around **inclusive leadership that begins in the home**. The event was attended by over 200 people and also livestreamed.

Recruitment for the **new BOP Tonga Country Manager** is now underway; the BOP team extends their gratitude to outgoing manager, Tupou Fakakovi, for her leadership of the BOP country program over the last three years.

Vanuatu

"It was really good to see these topics chosen by BOP and having young people think about them because they are the issues that will affect their future." Vanuatu's Special Envoy for Climate Change, The Hon Ralph Regenvanu

Continuation of the SHEFA **School Debate club** initiative in collaboration with Titan FX, Kiwanis & the Ministry of Education. The focus is on engaging young people - future voters - on **subjects of civic importance** with a specific emphasis on leadership, political participation and gender equality. The initiative also provides

a platform for young people - girls and boys - to express their views and build confidence and agency. The debates are being broadcast on social media and on national television.

The final draft of the research report, **'Unspoken rules of politics - voter**

motivations in Vanuatu', has been developed and has now undergone final validation and peer review, ready for official launching in November. The research is a collaborative project between BOP, the **Department of Women's Affairs** and the **Australian National University** to understand the motivations of voters and

political parties. A core part of the process has been the training of local enumerators and **facilitation of community forums** on inclusive, developmental leadership.

Ongoing partnership with the the **Vanuatu Institute of Public Administration (VIPAM)** and the **Public Service Commission**; in September, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Justice and Community Services**, it supported the **first-ever cohort of public servants** to participate in the University of the South Pacific accredited Certificate of Professional Development in Public Service Workplace

Leadership, ensuring a gender inclusive lens, and facilitated a **customised leadership retreat**.

BOP welcomes our **new Finance and Administration Assistant** for our Vanuatu program, Rosita Quai. Rosita brings seven years of experience from Youth Challenge Vanuatu in administration, finance, and HR. Rosita is also an alumna of Care International's Young Women's Leadership Program and is in the process of completing her Bachelor of Commerce in Finance degree at USP Emalus campus, Vanuatu.



Winners of the SHEFA Inter Secondary School Debate Competition

Fiji

“Being part of the Women’s Leadership Talent Pipeline program has enhanced my leadership skills and has connected me to a support system consisting of women and men leaders who are accompanying me in my leadership role”. Ms. Ufemia Sophie Radrodro, Nasinu DCOSS Chair

BOP Executive Director, Mereani Rokotuibau, was a panelist at the **Ministerial Forum on Gender Equality and Empowerment of all Women and Girls in Fiji**, convened by Hon. Lydia Tabuya,



Ms. Ufemia Sophie Radrodro, participant in the Women’s Leadership Pipeline program, receiving a medal from the President of Fiji in the lead-up to Fiji Day celebrations.

Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection. Ms Rokotuibau was able to share her perspectives on the importance of inclusive leadership for national prosperity and her recent work supporting the **review of the Great Council of Chiefs**, which has led to shifts in governance structures for increased women’s representation.

BOP supported **Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei (SSVM)** to convene the **first-ever national Indigenous Women’s Forum**, in partnership with **Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS)** and femLINKpacific. The Forum brought together SSVM representatives from across the country, as well as indigenous women from other women’s organisations, to build a shared understanding of opportunities to promote and enhance the advancement of indigenous women’s agenda.

BOP is continuing to partner with FCOSS on the **‘Building a Women’s Leadership Pipeline Program’** which supports women to amplify their leadership influence from

community to formal sub-national and national levels. A range of workshops and outreach activities have been conducted focusing on **nurturing women’s leadership** within the FCOSS network and mobilising men in support of women’s leadership.

BOP Executive Director, Mereani Rokotuibau, has been part of the **iTaukei Administration Review** team over this period, which has now completed its analysis on reforms from village to national level, with a particular focus on mainstreaming gender equality at all levels of iTaukei administration. The report was officially presented to the **Minister of iTaukei Affairs** in September.

BOP has been working with the Australian-funded **Fiji Facility** and the **Ministry of Education** to support the **Women in School Leadership Program** through conducting inclusive and adaptive leadership sessions, as well as the Board of Governors for the **Queen Victoria School** in leadership support for school prefects.

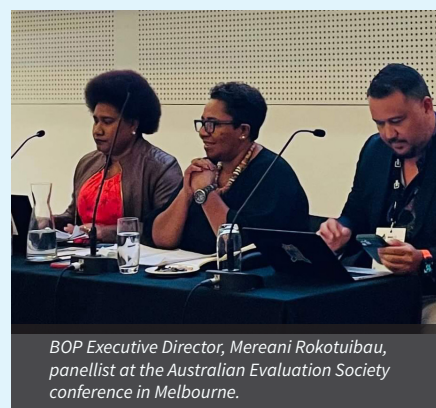
Regional

BOP Executive Director, Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, was invited by UN Women to participate in the **CEDAW GR40 Asia Pacific Region Consultation** in Bangkok in September. The event focused on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems.

Both BOP Executive Directors **held strategic meetings with DFAT in Canberra** on BOP beyond 2026 as well as presenting

on BOP during a DFAT ‘Brown Bag’ lunch and meeting with the **President of the Australian Senate, Sue Lines**.

BOP Executive Director, Mereani Rokotuibau, was part of a panel presenting on **‘Navigating the choppy waters of the evaluation landscape in the Pacific’**, alongside Professor Chris Roche, Allan Mua Illingworth, Eroni Wavu and Fiona Fandim Marat, at the **Australian Evaluation Conference**.



BOP Executive Director, Mereani Rokotuibau, panellist at the Australian Evaluation Society conference in Melbourne.